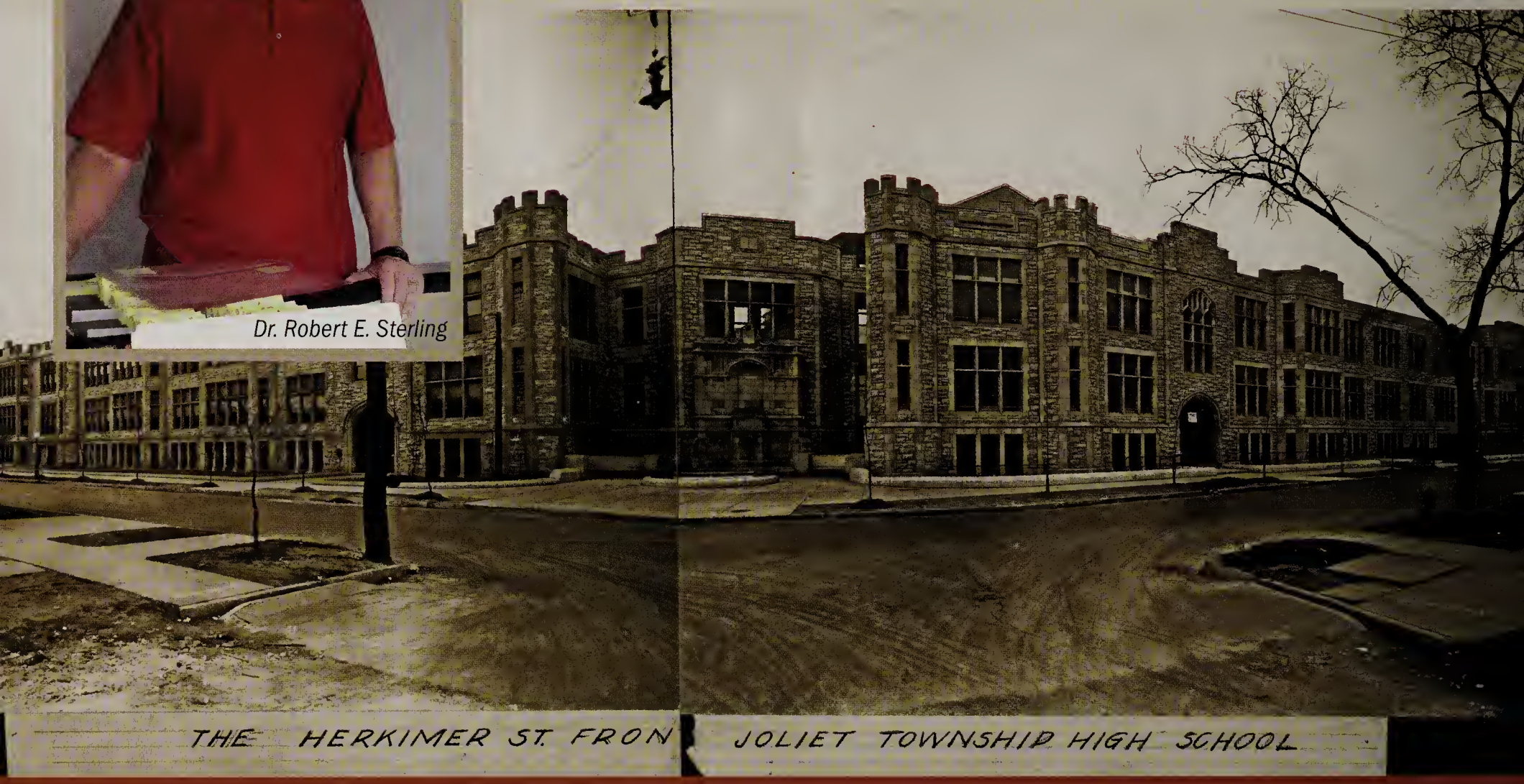
JJC Receives Significant Collection of Historical Artifacts

Dr. Robert E. Sterling



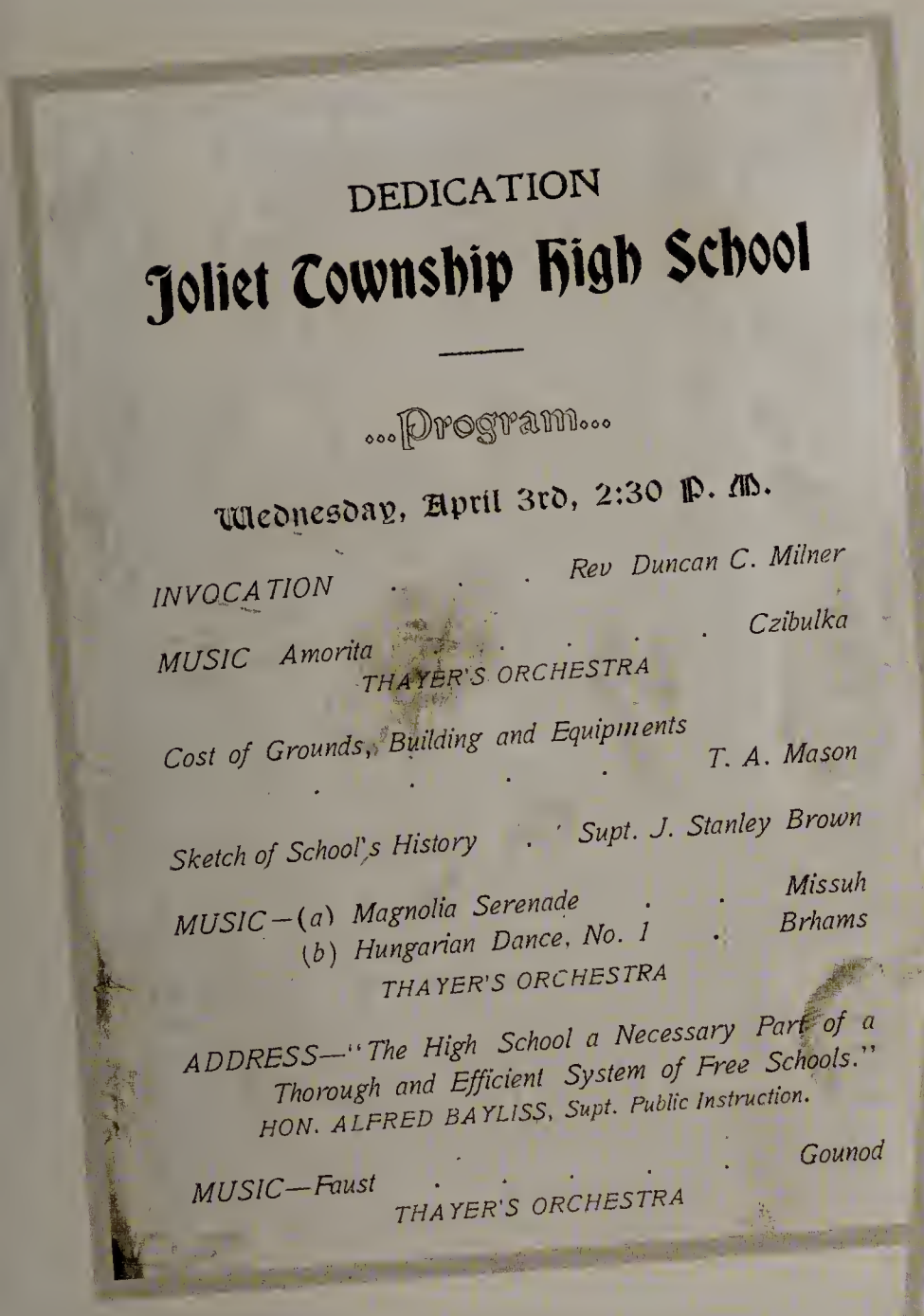
In April of this year, Dr. Robert E. Sterling, professor emeritus of history at JJC, donated hundreds of photographs, original college documents and historical ephemera to the college archives. The materials donated by Dr. Sterling serve as the most significant acquisition of historical documents to the college archives to date.

The materials cover the college's history from its beginnings in 1901 to the present day. Within the collection are original copies of the programs for the first and second commencement ceremonies at Joliet Township High School (where Joliet Junior College began), from 1900 and 1901; an intact copy of the "First Report," a publication that chronicles the planning, building, dedication and implementation of the high school in downtown Joliet; the minutes for the first student government meeting at JJC in 1929, as well as, hundreds of photographs showing the growth of JTHS and JJC over its 113 year existence.

The collection, however, might never have existed if it were not for Sterling's course assignments in the early part of his career at JJC. Dr. Sterling recently recalled the collection's unintentional beginnings:

"In 1969, I was asked to develop and teach a local history course. As a young, non-tenured history instructor, how could I say no? But really – local history? I quickly discovered that very few resources were available for teaching such a class, except musty old histories of Will County written in 1878 and 1907. In an effort to record local history as well as to study it, my students began taping oral history interviews with elderly residents in the community. Many interviewees were willing to share old photos and documents as well as their memories. I was hooked! For the next forty years, I avidly collected anything and everything related to the history of the Joliet region, including JJC."

It was this dedication to his students, community and profession, that led Sterling to build a collection that grew beyond the first of local history classes he taught at JJC and eventually led to the publication of seven pictorial histories of the Joliet region, including a centennial history of JJC published in 2001. All of Dr. Sterling's publications are available in the JJC Library, including the previously mentioned oral history interviews which are located in the college archives. Visitation and viewing of materials in the college archives



DEDICATION

Joliet Township High School

...Program...

Wednesday, April 3rd, 2:30 P. M.

INVOCATION . . . . *Rev Duncan C. Milner*

MUSIC Amorita . . . . . *Czibulka*
THAYER'S ORCHESTRA

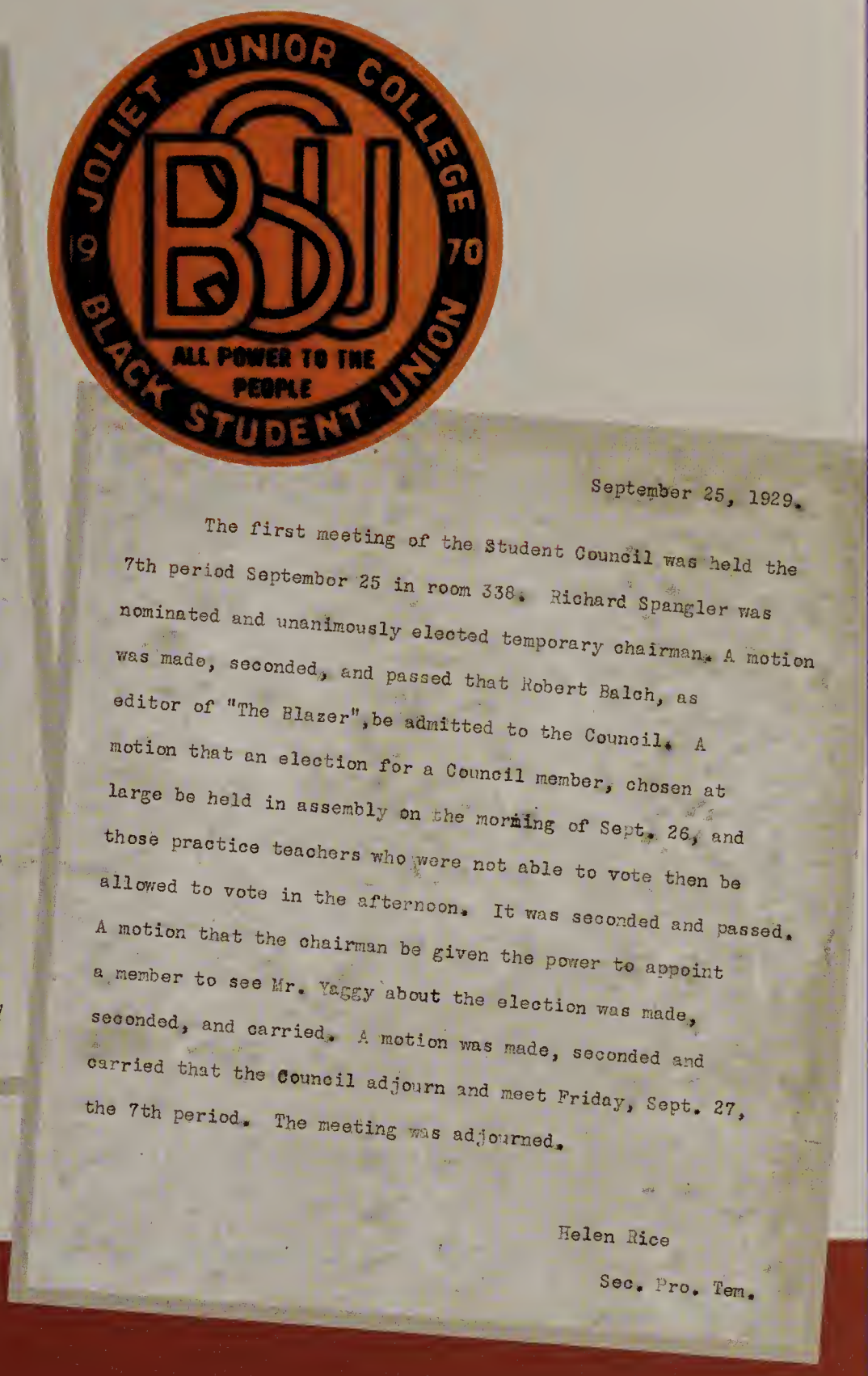
Cost of Grounds, Building and Equipments . . . . . *T. A. Mason*

Sketch of School's History . *Supt. J. Stanley Brown*

MUSIC—(a) Magnolia Serenade . . *Missuh*
(b) Hungarian Dance, No. 1 . *Brhams*
THAYER'S ORCHESTRA

ADDRESS—"The High School a Necessary Part of a Thorough and Efficient System of Free Schools."
HON. ALFRED BAYLISS, Supt. Public Instruction.

MUSIC—Faust . . . . . *Gounod*
THAYER'S ORCHESTRA



September 25, 1929.

The first meeting of the Student Council was held the 7th period September 25 in room 338. Richard Spangler was nominated and unanimously elected temporary chairman. A motion was made, seconded, and passed that Robert Balch, as editor of "The Blazer", be admitted to the Council. A motion that an election for a Council member, chosen at large be held in assembly on the morning of Sept. 26, and those practice teachers who were not able to vote then be allowed to vote in the afternoon. It was seconded and passed. A motion that the chairman be given the power to appoint a member to see Mr. Yaggy about the election was made, seconded, and carried. A motion was made, seconded and carried that the Council adjourn and meet Friday, Sept. 27, the 7th period. The meeting was adjourned.

Helen Rice

Sec. Pro. Tem.

is open to the public. To schedule a visit, please contact the JJC Library for available times.

The Sterling Collection will continue to serve as an educational resource for students and the community at large. The primary documents in the collection are invaluable to anyone researching the history of Joliet Junior College and its relationship locally to the Joliet community, and nationally to the development of higher education in America. Currently, the documents are being organized and catalogued to begin the digitization process. Once that is complete, the materials will be available digitally within the Joliet Junior College Library page on the Internet Archive, much like the college yearbook collection and the Wordeater collection. When Dr. Sterling delivered his collection to the JJC Archives, he commented that he hoped his donation would encourage others to donate their college photos and documents. As the College Archives continues to expand, it provides an important glimpse into the history and development of the college.

Looking for a safe, secure place to donate your JJC memorabilia?

The JJC Library Archives is always looking for ephemera from our college's past. If you have materials you would like to donate, or have any questions about materials in the library archive, please contact:

Joliet Junior College Library
1215 Houbolt Road
Joliet, IL 60431
ph: 815-280-2665